

guardian angels
by Sophie J.K. Scott

if this is what is happening now, then

i want to be awake for it.

You. & your cherub's face. the way you

voice darts around words. the coy

rhythm.

Me. & my sinking ship. the way i move,

like a hiccupping pick-up truck. its

haphazard melody.

we can sit & watch over the city, if you

promise to hold water in the palm of your

hand.

She. & her humming machinery. the

way she ticks, brazen in lunar-

light. the rattle of traffic.

Us. & our legs, stretched taut on the

grass. loose limbs, twinned on

a spring balcony. the soil sighs.

(& crickets chime into our heartbeat)

Sophie J.K. Scott is a poet and undergraduate history student from the UK, currently studying at Cardiff University. Her work has previously been published in *The Wellington Street Review*. Her twitter is @sneakycharmer and instagram is @sophiejkscott.

Bildungsroman
by Brianna Grothe

Once upon a time there were princesses & monsters
jewel-encrusted shoes & flames
diamond rings & studded fangs

& then comes the time of tears & blood on the spinning
wheel, a golden afternoon down the rabbit hole
dragons and trolls come to eat your first child alive

Leaves on the bottom of a stained coffee cup. the
one with the hand-painted flowers & the handle
severed off.

"There will come a time where cycles & red & hymen
are the same, where the maiden sits down for tea &
cigarettes with the whore. Eve will glitter like a
vampire & bring forth more demon babies than
Lilith by the same seed

"Where apples bear yellow skin & red heart centers
& the good witch with her missing teeth & her
longtime lover dine on whiskey & marijuana

"He will fall down to the dirt like the devil seventy
times seven & great visions will come upon him
as he descends, but he will always rise like the
angel he really is

"The last time he will fall is into your body
where virgins & sluts play hide-and-go-seek
until sunset & weave rainbow ribbons
through each other's hair, he will puncture
you with the kisses of his tongue until your
fles bleed out, black, blow green smoke into
your mouth until your soul bursts, he will
puzzle piece by piece, across many hushed
nights, the very nature of his sins, & you
will tell him it takes a lot for a person to turn
bad."

Brianna Grothe is a recent graduate from Oklahoma State University with a B.A. in English. Her poetry has been published by her university's undergraduate literary journal *Frontier Mosaic* as well as by *The Allegheny Review*. Besides writing poetry, her passions include designating mental illness, making connections between sexuality and spirituality, trying to reconcile her desire to be a domestic goddess with her lipstick feminist agenda, and sharing cat memes on Facebook. You can follow her on Twitter @womaninredclay.

TANGERINE DREAM
by Blue Bennett

love me because i'm raw

and you have a hunger in you i am

sustenance i am

rising

blood to the call of the hunt

to your call

you call,

forming the sounds of love,

the rhythms of it

but i hear

your heart. begging me

to leave you be

& I don't understand how you can look at me

and see me hungry,

how you don't drink the light /

i spun it from

the flesh of me. it could make you whole - you could

leave,

but you love you love me you love me you love you love me you love me you love me fuck god ggod god god god god I'm so sweet, so sugar-pie-tangerine, for you.

I HID MY LIGHT

"there's only so much love

one body can take"

I WAS THE SUN

WITHOUT

YOU

I WAS

VOID

I

LAUGHED

AND LAUGHED

AND THE WHOLE WORLD BURNED

Blue is a 21-year-old writer, eclectic witch, tarot reader and wildly experimental visual poet, creating art inspired by everything and anything - horror, weird coming-of-age novels, fantasy and indie films and absurdly long, sometimes emotional playlists. Through their art, they share who they are - them, a Black-British, mixed-heritage non-binary kid who wants people to experience his art, even for a moment, as though every inch of it breathes, writhes, lives. The magical, supernatural, introspective, vulnerable and painful are a few of the themes that most regularly surface in his work as he tackles trauma, homocentric vampirism, mythologised lesbian lovers and the (horrifyingly real) perils of teenage and young/new adulthood.

He's studying English Language and Literature at a certain red-brick university (for now), and you can find more of them, their work and endless musings over the finer points of politics, lesbianism, k-pop, Blackness, their ever-turning brain on @bitterbleu / @mortalcoeur on Tumblr, Twitter and Instagram.

Just Say Hello
by Nicola Allen

Look up, take a deep breath and just...say hello

The imaginary me sparkles. In my head, I am sociable. Because I am genuinely curious and interested in most things, I love talking to people and finding out about their lives.

In reality, I am a huge overthinker. I want to talk to people. I really do, but I spend so much time worrying about finding the right words, making my tone sound friendly and wanting to come across as a good person, I often lose my nerve and decide not to bother.

Occasionally, though, when I am brave and decide to try, it's always worth it

Last year, on a long train journey back from a conference, all I wanted was to get home as quickly as possible. I had a book, some music and a "please don't speak to me" face.

After a few minutes, I felt someone sit down next to me. I quickly glanced up and saw a man who looked like he was around my age. I remember thinking that he had a nice face, right before noticing that he was carrying a can of beer and seemed a little bit drunk.

He started fiddling with his phone, trying to find the charging point under the seat. He hit my leg and apologised for touching me. I looked up, he winked and smiled cheekily. I had a sense that he was going to be a talker. My brain immediately went into overdrive and my heart sank. If I was more extroverted this could be fun. Should I say something? What if he doesn't like me? What if he thinks I am weird? Both?

But what if he doesn't?

I took a deep breath, turned towards him, gestured towards his can of beer and asked, "good day?"

The next two hours flew, we talked non-stop, I couldn't remember the last time I had laughed that much. I didn't want the journey to end, but of course it had to. We hugged our goodbyes (something completely unheard of for me), and both returned to our respective homes.

I thought about the journey in the weeks that followed. How did it happen? What was the difference? I realised that it was me. I started the conversation and I let myself go with it without letting my brain take over and make me doubt myself. I wasn't afraid to ask the questions that were in my mind. I was happy to answer the many questions he had without worrying what he was thinking. And, I had a great time!

The little voice that makes me doubt myself is still there, I think she always will be, but I'm learning that I can ignore her. Imaginary me sparkles, but sometimes so does real me.